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# Congressional Record S. 7453 - The Situation in Vietnam

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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years, and more than 358,918 American casualties later.

Now we are mining the harbors of North Vietnam. We were told about it after the fact, not before. And there is always the possibility that this will bring about the possibility of a conflict with other nations if they do not obey our dictum and the law that we lay down, if they do not move out within a 3-day period from the 3-mile zone or the 12-mile zone. And it appears to me, Mr. President, that what we are witnessing is not a shortening of the war—although I hope devoutly that that is what it turns out to be—but rather a lengthening of it, an expanding of it, perhaps a placing of the SALT talks in jeopardy, and perhaps a bringing about of a cancellation or, at the least, a postponement of the Moscow conference, making it more difficult to release our prisoners of war and recoverable missing in action, and very likely increasing the total of the POW's.

So, I would hope that we would look at this somberly and soberly and recognize all the implications involved. I would expect also that no one would be criticized who happens to express a different point of view, because every Senator in this body has sworn to uphold the Constitution. Every Member of this body is entitled to the use of free speech and the exercise of his conscience. As far as I am concerned personally, the sooner this horrible, tragic war is brought to a close and every American is brought home, the better off I will feel, because to me 358,918 U.S. casualties in a 12-year period is 358,918 too many in a war in which we have no business and which is not vital to the security of this Nation, a war which, in my opinion, is the greatest tragedy which has ever befallen this Republic.

Mr. President, it does no great nation any harm to admit that a mistake has been made. And sometimes when nations and men will do so, they will be the bigger and the better for it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there further morning business?

#### THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I would call to the attention of my colleagues that the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which we are sworn to uphold, still is in existence. It says:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, . . .

By that I mean, if I may interpolate, to express our views as we honestly and conscientiously feel them. I continue to read from the first amendment:

. . . or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Mr. President, the statement has been made that there are additional measures which could still be taken. I really do not know what they are, because it appears to me that we have sent an armada of B-52's to Vietnam and Indochina.

Last weekend, if my memory serves me correctly, we sent an additional 75 fighter planes to an airfield in Thailand. We have the biggest sea flotilla ever assembled in that area, in the South China Sea, as well as some additional units in the Gulf of Thailand blockading Cambodia.

I would express the hope that when we talk about additional measures, we do not go too far, because it would be an easy way to win and, in winning, an easy way to lose.

I would call to the attention of my colleagues the latest total casualty figures beginning on January 1, 1961, through the 29th of April 1972, more than 11